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FORESTRY PRACTICES

Database will show 'disturbing trends' in province

BY RICHARD ROIK

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OTTAWA A comprehensive new database on Canadian forestry practices will show "very disturbing trends" in New Brunswick when it's unveiled today, says an architect of the project.

Rachel Plotkin, the national forests and biodiversity campaigner for the Sierra Club of Canada, said the database will highlight New Brunswick's unprecedented march toward more tree farms on Crown lands and its lack of progressive policies to protect the composition of its natural species.

The database also shows the province is faring poorly in areas such as chemical pesticides, harvesting patterns, silviculture practices and wildlife corridors.

Ms. Plotkin noted that New Brunswick isn't alone in "failing" in so many areas of public policy and forestry practice. But she said the database will show New Brunswickers there are options for their province to better manage its ecosystems.

"What's worth noting is that in almost every place where New Brunswick is doing poorly in terms of policy, at least one other province or territory has a progressive policy that it could use as a model," Ms. Plotkin said. "That means there are realistic objectives that can be achieved."

Ms. Plotkin noted that New Brunswick is the only province to set targets for more plantations on Crown lands.

"We hope the government of New Brunswick will use the database, see what the more progressive policies are, and try to emulate them," she said.

David Coon, policy director of the Conservation Council of New Brunswick, which assisted with the database, said the biggest concern in the province is the heavy reliance on clearcut harvesting in sensitive areas where selection harvesting is warranted.

He said the Acadian forest, in particular, is being lost by the clearcutting and the subsequent use of tree farms that reduce the variety of species that grow up in the affected areas.

The database will show, however, that New Brunswick has progressive revenue-sharing agreements with aboriginal communities.

The province is also promising to table within five weeks its response to policy proposals from the Select Committee on Wood Supply.

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